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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 001407

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/CACEN
DEFENSE FOR OSD (DASD MACDOUGALL)

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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: ARMENIA: GOOD PROGRESS ON DEFENSE ASSESSMENT

Classified By: CDA A.F. Godfrey for 1.4 (b, d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Although it took nearly two years to get Armenia to agree to a defense assessment, now that it has begun, good progress is being made. The second visit of U.S. experts took place July 26-28. After consultations with Armenia's general staff, the current draft accurately describes Armenia's military structure, capabilities and needs, and reflects a commitment by the Armenian military's senior leadership to openness, transparency, and an expanded role in international peacekeeping missions.

¶2. (C) Although the completion of this first phase brings Armenia an important step closer to an accurate and acceptable defense assessment, much remains to be done. Following the September 16-17 Bilateral Defense Consultation in Yerevan, the U.S. defense assessment team will draft an implementation plan that will require compromises on both sides. Despite Chief of General Staff General Mikhael Harutiunyan's assurances to the contrary, the GOAM will likely remain reluctant to agree on conclusions or to implement recommendations that would significantly alter Armenia's military system while the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh remains unresolved. End Summary.

BRIEFINGS YIELD CONSENSUS ON FIRST PHASE OF ASSESSMENT

¶3. (C) In a series of meetings to validate preliminary data collected during a U.S. defense assessment team visit to Armenia May 3-6, team members led by Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) Senior Analyst Donald Snedeker (under the auspices of the Office of the Secretary of Defense) reviewed major sections of the Armenia draft with Chief of the General Staff General Mikhael Harutiunyan. Harutiunyan and Deputy Minister of Defense Artur Aghabekyan noted they were pleased with progress on the draft after correcting some technical errors. Harutiunyan and Aghabekyan said they were committed to completing the assessment and are eager to receive the USG's conclusions and recommendations.

DEFENSE OFFICIALS OPEN AND TRANSPARENT IN DISCUSSIONS

¶4. (C) SAIC Senior Analyst Donald Snedeker said the U.S. team was encouraged by the Armenian military leadership's commitment to cooperation, openness and transparency, noting that Chairman of Defense Mikhael Harutiunyan openly discussed sensitive details about the Armenian military's structure, capabilities and needs. During a July 26 meeting, Armenian General Staff Head of Operations Brigadier General Chalyan unexpectedly volunteered the specific unit numbers of two previously undisclosed military intelligence units. When his assistant advised him against it, Chalyan responded, "we need to be transparent." In a separate meeting with the U.S. team on July 28, Harutiunyan said, "I didn't understand it initially, but now I believe that transparency in the defense assessment is in Armenia's interest."

DEFENSE OFFICIALS CALL FOR ADDITIONAL PEACEKEEPING ROLES

¶5. (C) Harutiunyan said he hopes the defense assessment identifies avenues for expanding Armenia's peacekeeping force, with the goal of creating a full NATO-compatible brigade. At every opportunity, Harutiunyan requested USG assistance in lobbying active peacekeeping nations to accept more Armenian peacekeeping contingents. Note: Since 2004, Armenia has maintained a platoon of peacekeepers in Kosovo where they operate within a Greek battalion, and since January 2005, Armenia has also maintained a non-combatant contingent in Iraq. End Note.

COMMENT: PROGRESS ENCOURAGING, BUT PROCESS JUST BEGINNING

16. (C) The GOAM will likely remain reluctant to implement recommendations that would significantly alter Armenia's military system while the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh remains unresolved. Harutiunyan told us he eagerly awaits the U.S. assessment team's conclusions and recommendations, but without having seen a draft it is difficult to speculate on the political or military costs of implementation. While the Armenian military leadership's increased openness and transparency (however limited) are encouraging, the GOAM's true commitment to the defense assessment may only become apparent after the USG hands over the final defense assessment in October.

GODFREY